

City of Cambridge – Recycling Advisory Committee

January 12, 2006 - Minutes taken by Adam Mitchell

Members Attending:

Rob Gogan, Harvard University; Cambridge Resident; David Johnston, Cambridge Housing Authority; Paul Schlaver, Cambridge Consumers' Council.

Guests Attending:

Kevin Douglas, FW Russell; Kelly Dunn, Recycling Program Manager; Randi Mail, Recycling Director; Doane Perry, Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association; Terry Smith, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce;

MassRecycle Presentation by Randi Mail

Randi reviewed the presentation that she gave at the recent MassRecycle Municipal Recycler's workshop held the prior day at Worcester State College. Her topic was the paper recycling initiative undertaken by Cambridge and Courtney Forrester, Solid Waste Manager from the City of Newton was a co-presenter. Randi described how Claire Sullivan, President of MassRecycle quantified the financial consequence of throwing out recyclable paper. She estimated that in 2000, Massachusetts residents, governments and businesses spent an estimated \$130 million to burn and bury about 2 million tons of paper!

Cambridge:

- From the 2003 DSM study, Cambridge discovered that an additional 1,500 tons of paper could still be recycled each year. This would save the City \$136,500 per year in avoided disposal costs and earn \$45,000 in recycling revenues. 1500 tons a year translates to 30 pounds per person, a challenge that each of us can commit to.
- Is capturing 86% of newspaper, but isn't doing as good a job diverting other fibers such as paperboard (33% recovery), cardboard (47% recovery), and mixed paper (50% recovery). DSM has said that 70% recovery rates are the maximum achievable.
- Surveyed 400 residents by email that had requested blue bins online to find out why they didn't recycle certain types of paper.
- The survey uncovered that some old rules about recycling were still held so we've been focusing education on the following points since with the overall slogan of "If it rips, recycle it": examples of paperboard (cereal & tissue boxes), plastic spouts on milk/juice cartons are OK, glossy paper & junk mail are OK – just no plastic wrapping, plastic windows on envelopes

and tissue boxes are OK, no need to remove staples, paper clips, or spiral bindings, all paper can be placed together in a paper bag and no need to tie up cardboard, it just needs to be secure under or between bins to avoid a litter mess.

- In terms of concerns about identity theft and junk mail, residents should only rip/shred papers w/account numbers, something with name & address isn't unique, you can get it in phonebook.)
- In addition to the fine-tuned education points described above, Cambridge received a grant to distribute 64-gallon totes just for paper and cardboard to owner-occupied households with 12 units or less. 200 totes are still available. Email Randi at rmal@cambridgema.gov or call 617-349-4866 if you are interested.

Newton:

- Used the EPA estimate that 45% of the municipal solid waste stream is composed of recyclable paper.
- Newton estimates that 2,300 tons of paper is left in the trash. Their goal is to divert 60% of the available paper for recycling. Their overall recycling rate is 47%. There have been weeks when their overall recycling rate goes over 50%.
- Newton hired a marketing firm to design campaign materials.
- People need to hear something 3 times before they "hear it" and 20 times before they do it.
- Newton: 1) mailing 2) banners 3) sandwich boards 4) magnets 5) Mayor talked about it in his state of the city speech.

Randi also told committee about the recycling enforcement efforts by the Town of North Andover reject visible recyclables set out with the trash, with a focus on cardboard. After about a year of education, the Town's contracted hauler will not

pick-up visible recyclables set out as trash. This has produced a huge spike in the cardboard recycling rate.

Trash Barrel Ordinance Change

The Committee reviewed the changes in the Refuse & Litter Ordinance adopted by the Cambridge City Council 12/19/05 that will take effect April 3, 2005.

- Refuse must be placed in rodent resistant barrels with tight fitting lids, if placed on the curb the night before collection.
- Barrels cannot be placed on the sidewalk before 6pm the night before collection.
- Trash in plastic bags can only be placed at the curb the day of collection, no later than 7am. Can't set out trash until 6:00 pm the day before collection

Randi reminded the Committee that the existing ordinance limits the size of trash barrels to 32 gallons and specifies that if bags are used they must be 3 mil thick. She also said that the interview committee for the new Compliance Officer position was almost ready to make a recommendation to the City Manager. Randi will be the direct supervisor for the Compliance Officer, as she is for the Sanitation Inspector.

Members felt that we needed to ensure that the recycling message wasn't lost with enforcement of this ordinance. The Committee discussed getting politicians to hold a press conference and declaring "If it rips, recycle it" while ripping a piece of paper to raise attention to the challenge to recycle more paper.

Randi discussed the education campaign that Public Works is putting together around the Ordinance changes that will include:

- Citywide mailing of a postcard, designed professionally
- Mailing of a poster, translated into Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Spanish and Chinese that will be sent to neighborhood groups with an offer that DPW can come to their meeting and make a presentation with Q&A
- Meeting with property managers of large buildings
- The Commissioner is talking with six local retailers regarding discounts and in-store education for proper barrels.

Tree Incident

Randi and Kevin reviewed the incident where a Russell truck badly damaged a tree that produced an unfortunate article in the Chronicle. The truck had to make a wide turn due to a car illegally parked at the corner, and in the process got caught on a low hanging limb. The City Arborist determined that the tree will be replaced in the spring. Some members felt that negative press could harm the recycling program while others thought that since the article was in the Christmas week paper, it wouldn't have been widely read.

Recycling and Trash Rates

The committee asked what the current trash generation and recycling rates were. Randi said she'd bring the numbers for the first six months to the next meeting.

School Recycling

Kelly gave the committee an update on school recycling activities. She's planning to use the "Backpack Express" to disseminate recycling information to send home with students. She met with Dana Ham, the new School Operations Mgr, who's very positive about the recycling program. Kelly also gave a presentation to the monthly custodians meeting. She will give more of an update at the next meeting.

40% Pledge

Randi gave a quick update. She's gathering information from the participants. Several of the partners have responded to her that they have met the 40% recycling goal including Harvard, HMFH Architects, Broadway Bicycle and Irving House at Harvard.